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Congo News Letter

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Christmas Number

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CONGO NEWS LETTER

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CHRISTMAS NUMBER

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Congo News Letter

GOD'S GIFT

He did not use a silvery box
Or paper green and red,
God laid His Christmas gift to men
Within a manger bed.

No silken cord was used to bind
This gift sent from above;
'Twas wrapped in swaddling clothes, and bound
With cords of tender love.

There was no evergreen to which
His precious Gift was tied;
Upon a bare tree on a hill
His Gift was crucified.

'Twas taken down from off the tree
And laid beneath the sod.
But death itself could not destroy
The precious Gift of God.

With mighty hand He lifted it
From out the stony grave;
For evermore to every man
A living Gift He gave.

A LETTER TO SANTA

Belgian Congo
Christmas Time 1950

DEAR SANTA,

It is almost Christmas time. We'd know it even if we didn't look at the calendar, for we can hear the sounds of the carols as the choir practices, and even now we are mending and pressing the costumes for the pageant. So it is time that we write our Christmas letter to you and tell you what we hope you will put in your bag for us.

First of all, we'd like to thank you for the presents we received last year. The visit of Mr. Farnum, our secretary, was a real blessing, and one of the nicest gifts we had. The arrival of Rev. and Mrs. Philip Uhlinger and Rev. and Mrs. Donald Niles, and the appointment of Dr. and Mrs. John Walker and Dr. Carrie Sprague made all of us happy. And then of course little Mary Jean Austin and Charles Gordon Metzger brought joy to all our hearts. We don't want to forget either the many, many, Congo people who learned to know Jesus, the boys and girls who came to our schools the sick who were healed, and all those who learned to live closer to God this year. All these were wonderful presents.

This year we want—well lots of things. Please don't think we are asking for too much—we really need all we ask for. We'd like you to be sure to put lots and lots of prayers in your bag. We need many of all sorts and sizes, but we need some specific sizes too. Banza Manteke needs a special prayer this year for the new girls' school that is being built there. So would you please see that there is a prayer for that work, for the school which will meet such a big need in the training of our young Christian girls, for Phil Uhlinger as he undertakes the building of it, and for the necessary staff to carry through the program? Kimpese wants a prayer for the young men who are training for Christian service. The staff there hopes that they may so teach that these men willfeel deeply the call to Christian service and will renew their consecration. At Kimpese they are also asking for prayers for the new medical school

which is being established in cooperation with several other missions. Sona Bata wants prayers for its schools which are faced with the problem of not being able to care for all the boys and girls who want to enter. Our schools are important, Santa, for it is through them that we are winning the young people of Congo. There are many needs for prayers at Léopoldville, the big city of Congo. It is there we see the Congolese who have been uprooted from the life to which they are accustomed, and are trying to find their place in an entirely new environment. So we need prayers that the missionaries at Léopoldville will be able to help them root themselves in Jesus Christ. Boko, too, needs prayers for the thousands of Bayaka people who are still living in darkness. Boko's prayers must be constant and fervent for there are so many there who have never seen the light. At Moanza they want prayers for the villages yet unwon, for the young teachers who are working in new villages. There is a new Bible school for Christian teachers to be started at Kikongo in January. Lewis Brown needs prayers for that undertaking, and the Niles want prayers as they begin their language study there. Vanga needs prayers for the thousands of new converts, that they may continue steadfast, and for the Congo pastors and teachers who are carrying such a tremendous responsibility this year. We don't want you to forget the missionaries in Belgium either. They want some prayers for their study there, that they may do their best and be better prepared to work in Congo. Yes, we want lots of prayers—all sizes, but these special sizes too.

We need more money too. There are buildings to be built, supplies to be bought, salaries to be paid, books to be printed, and lots of other things that require money. Surely somewhere in your workshop you can find some bills that are not being used to their best advantage, and you can put some of them in your bag for us. We'll be glad for any sizes, from $1 on up as big as you have.

There should be some new dolls in your bag too. We'd like several well-trained nurses to take over the work in some of our hospitals, and to organize clinics for the mothers and babies of Congo. And we'd like teachers who are interested in teaching the girls of Congo how to be Christian wives and mothers. It doesn't

matter whether the dolls have blond curly hair or not, but they should have a radiant Christian personality and a real zeal to win others to Christ. You ought to find some boy dolls for us too. We need several to direct our boys' schools. The boys in Congo want to have men to teach them, and the opportunities for working with the boys are greater than ever before. We need some men dolls who are strong and healthy so that they can visit our villages, hold services, speak with the people, win them to Christ. These dolls should be good walkers, full of energy, and it would be well too if they know how to keep a car in repair. They will need a great deal of "pep"and vigor if they are to visit all the villages. We need badly at least one new doll dressed in overalls, with hammer and saw in his hands, and nails in his pockets. He could build the new churches, schools, and houses that we need. So Santa, take some of those dolls off the shelves and pack them into your Congo bag. We want them and need them. They'd be happier here anyway.

The last thing on our list this year is souls. We want many of them again—Congo children who come into our schools and there learn not only to read and write and do arithmetic, but to know Jesus; young men and women who are challenged by the work for Christ in Congo, and offer themselves for full-time Christian service; adults who because they learn to know Jesus are lifted from a life of fear, superstition, and ignorance, into a happy fellowship with Him. This may be the last request on our list, but you know how important it is.

So we are writing to you, Santa, because we believe that you are real, that you are the Spirit of Christ in the hearts of all His children, and because we believe you will do your best to fill your bag with gifts for Congo.

YOUR CONGO MISSIONARIES

CHRISTMAS IN THE MOANZA HILLS

ALICE JORGENSON

MEMORIES of many Christmases come crowding in, as I think back to Old Moanza as well as to the New. In 1935 we were obliged to send the school children home on Thanksgiving Day because of the famine. The children were existing on such scanty rations that they could not keep on in school, so we had a feast and Christmas program and they went to their villages for several months. When the same conditions prevailed the next year it was rather discouraging. But when we had the feast and Christmas program late in November, the children were so thankful for the food they were given, that they could hardly eat it. One after the other thanked God and then they sang song after song of praise and thanksgiving.

That was my first Christmas at Moanza. Toward Christmas time Ruth Dickey and I made a tour through some of the southern villages to tell of God's Gift of a Saviour. Many people heard the story gladly and many manifested a desire to follow the Saviour. At one place three chiefs were gathered for a palaver. As they listened they seemed greatly impressed, but they took no steps to accept Him who is Lord of lords and King of kings. We came back to Moanza on Christmas morning. The early morning sun shining on the dew upon the grass of the wayside, the white mists in the valley and the clouds dotting the hill-tops made such a picture as cannot be forgotten. We were back at the Mission in time for the ten o'clock service when we rejoiced with the Christians, as we thought of the Babe of Bethlehem.

On my first Christmas at the present site, Browns and I fellowshipped with our native brethren. The story that never grows old, again warmed our hearts. It was war-time and we wondered what we could do for our people. But gifts were found for all in the White Cross boxes that came in spite of war disturbances on land and sea, because God willed that His needy children should not lack. The next year we were cheered and aided by Eva Shepard, whose school children made the hills resound as they told the Christmas story in song and Scripture verse.

Many a Christmas morning we have been awakened at four-thirty or five by carollers; groups of school boys and teachers, who have come to sing out the joy of their hearts, for the Saviour given. Sometimes they have sung all night, but then they have been too weary to really enjoy the Day, and so that has been discouraged. Many a pageant has so vividly portrayed the manger scene, the shepherds on the hillsides of Judea, and even the vision of Angels, that the Story has been made to live before the eyes of our Congo people. And through this medium they have come to have a new understanding of the events of that Day. Of late years pastors in some of the out-posts train their "angel choirs" and on Christmas morn these announce the Saviour's birth while hidden in the thick branches of mango trees. Hundreds of people gather for this event from the nearby villages, and listen and watch with spell-bound attention.

And so the Wonderful Story that was told so many years ago, is being told at the Mission Station, in the out-posts, in the villages. We pray that those who hear may understand, and like the shepherds and the wisemen go to seek the Saviour.

Charles Gordon arrived at the home of Rev. and Mrs. Roland Metzger on September 25th. We join Roland, Lillian and little Paul in giving him a warm welcome into our Congo family.

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

RHODA ARMSTRONG

THINKING back over the past quarter century, the greater part of which has been spent in Congo, certain vivid pictures come to mind—

There was the Christmas which was our first in Congo. It was only a matter of weeks since our arrival, and we did not speak the native language with facility yet. But we had a big tin of hard candies from home, and felt that we could add to the Christmas festivities. The children all seemed to like our contribution, but one little girl followed us over to the house, complaining because all the other children had had "sugar" and she also wanted a piece. "But you did get a piece of candy, what is that in your hand?" "That," she said bitterly, "is *medicine*!" (It was peppermint candy, and once at the dispensary she had been given some drops of peppermint oil for a stomach ache.)

There was the Christmas when we had our son with us, the only one he ever spent in Congo. He was less than a year old but his eyes shone like stars when he looked at the tiny tree with homemade ornaments that had been fixed for him. Some said he was sleepy and it was only the reflection of the candles in his eyes; but his fond parents knew better.

There was the Christmas, celebration of which had to be delayed till the following year. Mr. MacDiarmid was our mission secretary then, and he had come to visit our Kikongo field. Ben had met him in the Bayaka district, and meetings had been held in various centers to proclaim the glad tidings of the birth of a Savior. They did not reach the mission station till after New Year's, and of course we had waited with our Christmas celebration until they could come and have a part.

There was the Christmas when we had no thought or heart for celebrating. On Christmas Eve we had received an official letter, saying that permission to occupy the land was withdrawn, and plans

for a mission station were to be abandoned. We could not believe that that was God's purpose, and hours were spent on our knees, pleading for His guidance, and asking for a manifestation of His power. The answer came in peaceful hearts and quiet confidence that He would work it out in His own good way and time. Months later a series of what men would call "unusual coincidences" linked up with happenings of the previous year, and before the time given for abandoning the site was up, the previous letter was rescinded and definite permission given to build a mission station.

There was the Christmas that Mrs. Bain spent with us, her last Christmas in Congo. Having come out as a missionary in the last century, she had seen the parable of the mustard seed come to life. She had seen heathendom in its rawest forms, and now she was stationed at Vanga where the growing, active church was shepherded by a group of splendid African Christians. Much of our time during those Christmas days was spent listening to her stories of the early beginnings of the mission.

There was the Christmas which we celebrated in the month of May. We had returned from furlough, fully expecting to spend Christmas in Congo. Families and friends of our fellow missionaries had sent gifts for them in our care. But trunks and cases had been delayed in shipment and did not come to their final destination until May of the following year. So we invited the others for supper on a certain evening, set up a little tree with decorations and candles (of course we did not have a pine tree, but a little imagination and good will can transform any tree into a Christmas tree) and put the gaily wrapped gifts under it. A surprise Christmas party !

There was the Christmas when we really had to scrape and work to get enough for a Christmas feast for the school children. Meat is always a scarce item in their diet, and they are so hungry for it ! We had finally been able to buy enough goats so that there was a good piece of meat with gravy for each one, together with enough rice, greens, and bananas so that every growing boy could

"change appetite into happy and tight" as Mama Hill used to say. While they were still sitting at the tables, replete and happy, some with part of their food carefully wrapped in a clean leaf so that the feast could be extended to the following day, we heard one little boy sigh, "I am full of rice but I could eat some more meat."

There was the Christmas that we did not spend in Congo at all. It was during the war. To get passage was difficult, and at times seemed impossible. Finally, a few days after Pearl Harbor, we sailed on a small, slow cargo boat. On the way to the steamer, Mrs. Emory Ross decided that we must have something along for Christmas. We were already far from the shopping district of New York, there was no time to turn back, so when she saw a small artificial tree in an office window, she bravely went in and more or less browbeat the owner into selling her the tree. Christmas was celebrated "somewhere on the Atlantic" with a tree, various little knick-knacks, and much singing of Christmas carols in the blackout of those war nights. No other preparation for Christmas had been made by crew or passengers, and great appreciation was voiced from all sides. On the next trip, the cargo boat was torpedoed and sunk.

There was the Christmas—not really "the" Christmas, for it is a composite picture of many such occasions—when we arose "a long time before dawn" to the sound of pattering feet running toward the church for the early Christmas morning candlelight service—when some time in the forenoon we went down to the river for a baptismal service, because some who had experienced the new birth wanted to give their witness of it on the day of their Savior's birth—when in the evening we sat in an audience of hundreds of villagers who watched the school boys and girls show in pageant and song the coming of the shepherds to the manger, and the wise men presenting gifts to the infant Jesus—when all during the day we had had warm thoughts of appreciation toward the friends at home for the gifts and greetings that they had thoughtfully and lovingly sent and best of all, a new awareness of the reason for our being missionaries at all, the lovely great gift of God's Son who was born in Bethlehem.

CHRISTMAS JOY AMONG LEPERS

EMILY SATTERBERG

CHRISTMAS joy was in the air as everyone was busy getting ready for a happy time. The different food stuffs were being carried to a central place for distribution. When all the station friends had been supplied our thoughts turned to Mbemba our Leper Camp. The car was loaded with meat, beans, rice, salt, onions and gifts too.

Mbemba is about two and a half miles from our station so it did not take too many minutes to get there. As we approached the camp we heard singing, real joyful singing too. The little chapel was dimly lighted because these people have only small lanterns which do not give off a very bright light. However the dim lighting did not in any way affect their singing and happiness. We went to the chapel and joined in with them but I could not sing, my heart was too stirred to even utter a sound. Here were these unfortunate people clapping their hands and singing Praises to God. They were happy in spite of their sufferings and isolation. As I stood there I thought and prayed "Oh God make me a more worthy representative of thee and more thankful for all the opportunities of life which I have every day." I wonder how you would have felt if you had been there.

Then came the time for the distribution of the food and gifts. The lepers gathered around us and as each name was called came forward with a small dish or cloth to receive the alotted portion of beans, rice, meat, salt and onion. Our onion supply was low so the last ones only received a half. Each one was given a bowl, spoon and a water bottle. Happy, yes they were.

You would never have known that these friends were afflicted with this dread disease if you had not seen those who could hardly walk, those whose fingers were gone, those whose feet were crippled, those whose faces were distorted by tumor-like growths, those whose bodies were covered with sores and spots. But they were happy and I shall never forget as long as I live how one of the lepers came forward to thank us for the gifts, his face was beaming.

The prayer of Thanksgiving that he offered to God revealed the true joy that he had in his heart.

It made us all thankful that we could have a small part in bringing Christmas joy to these our friends. Thankful to God for His wonderful Gift to mankind, for His wonderful Love for each one regardless of color or station in life. So again as we approach the Christmas season may we all experience the true Christmas Joy as we think of Him who gave His life for our redemption and whose gift is eternal life to as many as receive Him.

CONGO CHRISTMAS

MARGUERITE ELDREDGE

THE promise of a Congo Christmas was made when angels sang in the long ago over Galilean hills. The practice of it among the Congo children began when missionary penetration of this land started about seventy years ago. Many work together now to make the observance of the Christmas season a time of blessing and joy.

In mission circles fingers fly as mothers and grandmothers cut, and sew patchwork and all kinds of articles to be worn, or used in hospitals. Guild girls sew, knit, snip, paste and prepare scrap-books. Sunday school and Vacation Bible school children make toys, dress dolls or earn nickles and dimes to buy presents for summer Christmas-trees. Daddies and business men get together with boards, hammer, saw and nails to pack the boxes and transport them to trains and steamers. Many months later a caravan of Congo men wind like a huge snake down the hillside. To each box a pole has been tied, and two men carry the box with the pole across the shoulders, occasionally throwing the pole over their heads in order to change the weight of burden from left to right, and never changing the tempo of their steady, even tread on the path.

Whenever these boxes arrive there is a "little" Congo Christmas with missionaries all gathered around and the lids are taken

off. Sometimes the gifts are in individual cartons as sent by the donors. Sometimes for economy in packing the treasures are immediately visible when the lid comes off. Feelings of expectation are intermingled with mystery and surprise, and withal at the great joy which gifts will some day bring to our dusky-skinned Congo family. So, in unpacking there is the sorting which will one day make distributions easier; hospital supplies and baby clinic supplies to the medical department; notebooks, pads, pencils, pens etc., to the school and evangelistic side of the work; clothing, bedding, towels, toys and sewing materials placed in accessible places for the "between" Christmases.

The "between" Christmas comes at any time, may minister to an individual or rejoice the hearts of multitudes. See the throng of naked kiddies in distant villages where the annual visit of the missionary is a much heralded and long remembered event, and hear the shouts of glee when pictures and trinkets and toys are distributed. One rubber ball to a whole school means a great deal. Why one ? Because most stations serve over 200 village schools, and that makes quite a pile of balls! Faithful attendance at weekly baby welfare clinics with teaching, soap and needed medication freely given to over 300 mothers with babes and toddlers is much more interesting when at unexpected intervals gurgling babes get outing-flannel blankets or warm shirts, and the toddlers strut proudly home with their bright colored little dresses, yes the boys get dresses too for strange as it may seem, scarcely ever are there sunsuits, rompers or "he—clothes" for wee lads. At the beginning and middle of school terms ear-to-ear smiles reward the distributor of note-books, pencils with erasers, and balls for recess recreation time. Poorly paid pastors and families are supplied with needed clothing. A sheet becomes a shroud for the deceased and the bereaved are comforted.

Preparation for the real Christmas demands much planning. Inventory is made of available White Cross goods on hand. Lists are compiled of those to whom gifts should be presented and when possible as early as October the missionary staff or a committee tries to fit the list and gifts together. Attention must be given to age, length of service, numbers of pupils by classes, and the varied

detail which will prevent jealousies and discord between groups or individuals, and really foster the true spirit of joy with thoughtful appreciation to unknown friends who for Christ's sake have provided the gifts. When in doubt as to whether the natives consider a 2-piece pajama suit inferior to a shirt, a doll preferable to a head-kerchief, adroit questioning may produce guidance. The care, ingenuity and time used for all of this is usually 100% rewarded when cheerful shouts or smiling approbation follow the distribution of gifts. A rainy day or 2 or 3 evenings are required to wrap, tie and tag the gifts. Pages of magazines and newspapers, raffia string and common pins help in these operations and serve as acceptably as finer things. It is not in the wrappings, but in the gift that affections lie.

By the last of October the air is ladened with Christmas hymns and carols being learned and the audible memorization of suitable Scripture and pageant parts. On a Sunday early in December and just prior to closing of school, special exercises, music and messages focus all attention on Christ, God's wonderful gift to us and the privilege which is ours to accept or reject Him. Monday morning is given over to sports and games, and the afternoon to gathering and preparing food for a feast. By Tuesday noon the feast is ready. The workmen and families assemble at the shop, pupils in the main school building and the hospital ambulatory patients in an adjacent school building. The missionaries distribute themselves among the various groups and aid in serving meat or fish, greens, mushrooms, squash-seed, rice, peanuts, manioc or cassava and pineapples. The poor collect their food on a big leaf, more particular ones have several leaves to hold each food separately, and the growing-civilized have from one to several enamel plates and bowls. Frugal serving on firsts to be sure food will suffice, happily means that there are usually seconds on most foods. A hymn and prayer precede the distribution of food, but later after all are seated to eat, real prayers of thanksgiving are offered for food which is now really their own. Then with laughter and song intermingled a part of the food is eaten, and a portion is always saved to take home for another meal or to share with village friends.

And now before dispersing, the big baskets come around, and the Christmas gifts are distributed. Belts are fastened on, neckties draped about necks, kerchiefs tied on heads, dolls cuddled, balls tossed about and jack-knives start carving names or initials on school furniture. Boys will be boys the world over.

"Thank you *Ba-Mama* and *Ba-Tata* missionaries for giving us such joy. We are glad you have come to this land to teach us of God's love and to show us the Christian way of giving and sharing one with another. What, you say, you do not do these things for us? Well then, send our thanks and appreciation to white folk over in America, telling them that we enjoy these THINGS, but our land also needs more workers; evangelists, teachers to train us as carpenters, mechanics, masons; and above all a doctor to help heal our many sicknesses. *Melly, melly Klistmas kwa babo* (to all] !"

BE CALM

Mvwangu has a class of lively girls. Though they do want to learn, at times they can be very annoying. Consequently, one day, Mvwangu comes into the school office and exclaims: "Mama, I do not know what to do with those girls. They do not obey!"

"Sit down a minute, Mvwangu," I said. "Probably if we are quiet a bit, it will not be so hard to manage them." A big boy like you ought to be able to make those little girls mind. If you are calm, they will be quiet."

He sat down, while I finished my conversation with someone else. Then, as I turned to him, he said "Mama, I think I can go back, now."

Mvwangu returned to his work and mastered his difficulty.

In these days of unrest and rush, our Congolese, as well as ourselves, need to seek quiet. Let us, above all, go to Him who created us, for He can give true peace of mind.

CHRISTMAS AT KIMPESE

MARGARET HALL

ABOUT the time we arrived in Congo for our first term, there returned to Vanga, from the Training School at Kimpese, Vanga's first two men to graduate from that school, so far away down country. We were stationed at Vanga for school work but it was not our privilege to have the help of these men. They were more sorely needed out in the district to work with Mr. Brown in shepherding the fast growing churches.

However, a couple of years later the next two to graduate came back to the work so greatly needing their help. They were assigned to the station school; many burdens were lightened. As Christmas time approached they asked if it couldn't be observed with a pageant. They hurriedly explained that they could do it all, just as they had seen it done at Kimpese, if we could only give them a bit of help with costumes.

Their efforts were well rewarded. The pageant was a wonderful success. The "Voice," way up in the tower of the as yet uncompleted new church, directed and explained the procedure of crowds going to Bethlehem, the appearance of angels, visits of shepherds and wise men, and the flight into Egypt. By request it was repeated a few months later, when thousands came in from surrounding villages and outlying districts for the dedication of the new church.

During the years that followed there came to us frequent reports of the interesting pageants presented each Christmas at Kimpese under the direction of Dr. Mabie, who very ably translated many Christmas stories to serve as background for the all-important Christmas story and the impressive manger scene. Then Dr. Mabie retired, and others endeavoured to follow in her train—the Ericksons, Grace Cooper and the Halls. It came to be felt that Christmas at Kimpese without a pageant would not be truly Christmas.

However, last year there didn't seem to be any time in the program, or on the part of any staff member, for pageant planning

or preparation, so observance had to be different in some respects. Emphasis was placed more on Christmas as a home festival. All students were given in art classes bits of crepe paper and pictures (old Christmas cards and Bible pictures from White Cross) and shown how to use them to decorate their houses. On Christmas eve, after a special service of song, at which time various groups from different areas sang carols in many languages, all homes were opened to the admiration of visitors. Christmas night, campfire sings were enjoyed in the student villages, as well as in the workmen's. Enough White Cross materials were in hand so that each child was given a garment, the men school bags, and the women a wash cloth or handkerchief.

On Christmas day itself, a Sunday, three services were held. Ever since the coming of the Swedish mission in 1938 into the fellowship of American and British Baptists who began the work here, an early morning service of Swedish tradition has become a real part of Christmas observance. It is a wonderful experience to be awakened at 4. a.m. by the church bell, and then a few minutes later to see lights from every direction approaching the church, as students and their families wend their way from the various villages. Then the singing of "Silent Night" in the stillness of the candle lighted church! And finally the closing joyful Christmas hymn sung by the whole congregation as the first rays of dawn break upon the happy day.

The second service was that of the Junior Church, with special carols. Then those children went home to care for the babies and very small children, so the mothers might enjoy to the full the lovely old hymns and ever new message of the 10 o'clock service for adults.

Congo peoples have always had an idea of God, a name for Him is found in all dialects—a supreme being, creator—but about Him they have known practically nothing, as they believed Him to have no concern for them. We tell them that it was even thus with other peoples until God, in His great love for all, revealed Himself to man through His son who came into the world as a child. During His life on earth He was submitted to all the temptations that are ours, in order that He might show us how we may

also be conquerors, through the power given us by His Spirit, once we have believed on Him as God's son who died for our sins. Belief and trust in a God of such love frees them in a marvelous way from the bondage of fear, superstition and evil spirits with which in their ignorance they have been bound. Celebration of the birth in Bethlehem of that little child is the happiest event of the year. And on our mission stations observance is entirely religious. But in Léopoldville and other centers the gaudy, commercial carousing customs of non-Christian civilization are fast finding a place among the peoples of this country. What a pity! Civilization without Christ is worse than any unadulterated heathenism.

More missionaries and more funds are ever the cry, that the joy and peace of the Christmas message may become the prized possession of an ever increasing number.

JOY OF GIVING

For somehow not only at Christmas,
But all the long year through,
The joy that you give to others
Is the joy that comes back to you.
And the more you spend in helping
The poor and lonely and sad,
The more your heart's possessing
Returns to make you glad.

CONGO — THE BIG SURPRISE

ROSE UHLINGER

IT seems only yesterday, but in reality a year has passed, since our plane circled and quickly landed on the dirt runway at Irumu. Congo at last ! As we stepped out of the plane and into the hot noon-day sun, presenting our little Nancy Joy to her waiting grandparents for the first time, it seemed that this was really the Congo of my expectations. Here were hordes of scantily clad "savages" come to welcome the various missionaries on the plane—over a little way was the ticket office and customs *bureau* of the airport, a tiny bamboo hut with thatched roof and dirt floor. In the month that we spent in eastern Congo visiting relatives and friends I found much that confirmed every person's idea of Africa—we stopped the car one evening for a herd of elephants to cross the road; Phil went hunting and brought back buffalo and antelope and wild boar; we hiked down an elephant trail in the forest to talk to some tiny Pygmies clothed only in a bark-cloth loin cloth and carrying the traditional bow and arrow. Missionaries complained of monkeys eating their bananas. Later in lower Congo we were to see four vividly green crocodiles on one short river trip. We spent a week-end in a "mud" house with thatched roof and pounded clay floors that Phil's father had built years before, but it seemed like a cozy white-washed cottage with a quaint thatched roof, not the primitive jungle hut it sounds like. We worshipped in mud and thatch churches with rows of naked or nearly naked children crowded up at the front. We watched the women carry their babies on their backs and unbelievably heavy loads on their heads. We saw many men carrying spears everywhere they went.

And yet there seemed to be more that was completely in contrast to all the old adventure stories of Africa. I have so far looked in vain for the darkest Africa of slimy jungles which even the sun cannot penetrate. . . . sweltering in the moist equatorial heat. Our month in eastern Congo was spent crossing almost tree-

less plains and climbing steep wooded hills and mountains to look out over breathtaking views of lakes, valleys and small forests or hiking up to beautiful water-falls—and wearing a sweater all the time or sitting cozily near a crackling fire which was lit in the fireplace each day for we were high above sea level. We even spent several days at a mission station nestled at the foot of the snow-capped Ruwenzori mountains. And here in lower Congo we again find a country of pretty hills, mountains studded with "crystal" rocks, and small forests deep in the ravines where the creeks run. Twenty years ago Banza Manteke was a treeless plateau covered only with tall grass. Today it is a lovely mission station, covered with young palms, great mango trees, frangi pangis with their blossoms of yellow, white or fuscia, and flaming bougainvillea, green lawns and flowers.

As a child there were two things which impressed me and my playmates about missionaries. First of all they seemed to have spent their time sort of wandering around haphazardly preaching —making a convert here, another there, and then leaving them to their own devices. Now I find that quite to the contrary the work is well organized. Banza Manteke area, for example, is divided into 11 districts each with a pastor. Each pastor's flock consists of several villages, and he also has general supervision of the one or two regional schools—grades 3 through 5—in his area. Each village in turn has a village school consisting of first and second grades, with either a young man doing his year's internship as teacher or a village evangelist-teacher combined, or both. These village teachers and evangelists are often poorly trained and that is one of our biggest problems. The Bible school being established at Kikongo is hoped to relieve this situation in our Kwango area. Here on the station we have schools going up through the third year of secondary school. It is from these young people that we hope to get our future pastors, teachers and nurses. It *is* true that the missionary goes from village to village, trying to reach each one as often as possible, but it isn't haphazard and the pastors and teachers are there to carry on and nurture the young Christians and the growing church while the missionary is busy in other villages and with his many other duties.

The second impression my friends and I received about missionaries was that they were all poor things living under terrible conditions and making great sacrifices in order to follow their noble calling. I think every missionary appeal ended with the same general theme—"Since God has done so much for you, won't you make this supreme sacrifice and be a missionary for Him?" After one short year as a missionary, I would suggest that this appeal would be more realistic, for Congo at least, if it sounded a bit more like an Arizona or California adv: "Fun in the sun. Come to Congo as a missionary—enjoy the comforts of a nine months' summer, in a lush tropical setting and a crisp two to three month autumn. Golden brown sun tans easily acquired. Pick your oranges, avacadoes, bananas, pineapples right off the trees. Live in roomy comfortable homes in beautiful hand-made brick or choose the "atmosphere" of a whitewashed sun-dried brick home with Congo-style thatched roof. Electricity available when motors are in good repair. Hiking through interesting scenery is a common and practical sport as the missionary goes from village to village. Enjoy the thrill of camping and cooking your food over an open fire—or rides up the Congo river and through the rapids in an open motor launch as you visit outposts. Hunting opportunities for killing antelope and buffalo; lions in some sections. A life-time job amongst a responsive friendly people eager for the Good News. A pleasant life serving God and man."

If anyone still thinks life in Congo is dull and drab he should come to lower Congo and see the beautiful costumes of the native women—long wrap-around skirts, low-necked blouses with smocked, or gathered bodice and the matching *nlele*—a shawl-like cloth that can be draped over the head, tied around the hips as an overskirt or used to carry the baby in on his mother's back—all in exotic patterns of rich greens, maroons, golds, blues and reds. They love color and wear it to advantage. Perhaps the most colorful and meaningful event of our first year was the Christmas pageant which Yvonne Engwall and I had the fun of directing. All the participants were primary and junior-aged tots and even the readers had to be clothed in bright Biblical costumes—no plain old Sunday best for them. Our angel chorus was arrayed in pastel

crepe paper costumes with matching halos and what adorable little carolers they made between each scene. Only the five-year old twins who acted as angel curtain-pullers were dressed in the traditional white—but the cocky angle of their wired halos offset the somber effect somewhat. Eight year old "Mary" was a beautiful Madonna in softest, softest blue and nine year old "Joseph" stood protectively by her side in a coat whose rainbow hues would have done justice to his Old Testament namesake. The three tiny wise men came solemnly down the aisle with such measured tread that they would almost lose their balance standing on one foot waiting for the next beat. They were robed in all the splendor of oriental tapestries and must have been sweltering on that warm Christmas evening, but all we noticed was the earnestness of their faces as each sang his verse of "We Three Kings of Orient Are" in sweet boy soprano, and then knelt reverently amongst the stuffed calico animals before the manger. This love of color to the Congolese is an expression of their joy in life –joy that has come because Christ has been born in their hearts.

No, Congo is not just exactly what I expected. But it has been a pleasant surprise. Even as I close this article, I hear from across the station, not the distant sound of beating, drums but the rousing strains of Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" which the boys from the school are singing spontaneously and beautifully in sheer happiness—for Christianity brings joy to the hearts of men.

Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. LUKE 2:10–11.

HOW MY FIRST YEAR PASSED AT LEOPOLDVILLE WEST 1933-34

(A letter written in 1934 by ETELKA M. SCHAFFER)

EARLY every morning my *pousse-posse* (a sort of rickshaw,) springless but gay blue, left the group of missionary residences on the river front and wended its way to the school through the native village, called *Belge*. We passed the market where men and women sat on the ground displaying their wares: bananas, vegetables, rice, and plantain fried cakes, chickens, native drink, cigarettes, etc. Some days we saw a policeman wrestling with a woman or a man, searching for some petty thing to arrest one. Here and there someone smiled and greeted us.

On we ran through native manioc gardens, or overgrown meadows in between rows of native houses, a few well built and pleasing, but many needing a coat of mud or a new roof of iron or thatch. Each house is enclosed with a heavy barricaded fence. Then we came to the large Catholic social center in the process of construction, and a few steps away, our school.

Our morning school averaged 125 pupils, tiny tots to grown men, the number of girls increased toward the end of the year. The two languages made a distinct problem, for what had to be taught once had to be taught twice, explained once, explained twice—and so the hours passed from Kikongo to Lingala and later to French. This was a very miscellaneous group, the majority being in the city in search of money, but now out of work. As long as one has a relative in town, however, one need not starve.

In the city, one puts aside many of the village customs, rules and regulations, but the laws of the State keep the people within bounds, and their greatest fear is a term in "block" as they call the prison. In the urban sections, each man of taxable age has to have a card of identity, a photo, a permit for housing quarters, and he pays a yearly tax of 88 francs (about $4). On checking up, we discovered many who lacked one or all of these requirements, a few who had not paid taxes for two or three years. It amounted

to a skill with some in the evasion of the police. If arrested for lack of a photo, it meant eight days in "block"; if for tax arrears, two months at hard labor for every year. Those without work can be excused if they sign up every week. This was too much regularity for some, and so we found a few of the young men in jail instead of in school. One pupil was in block for stealing, another for fighting over a woman, etc.

The village is alive with native drink stands -- corn, plantains, sugar cane, manioc, the sap of the palm tree are all used to concoct the intoxicating drinks. On Sundays and evenings, dancing, is an added attraction. I passed a group one afternoon and recognized one of our men dressed in banana leaves dancing a weird native round. One Sunday morning on the way to church, we passed an open air native *café*. One man when he saw us, stepped behind another to hide but I had already recognized him as one of our pupils. Monday morning, the pastor called him aside. He showed us his "seeker's" card. The pastor told him that to follow Christ meant to drop the old ways. He looked at us gratefully and said, "Please teach me more, I know so little."

Our boys became enthusiastic about football and soon organized a team playing against the village schools and the boys of Kinshasa. They gathered their available cash together and with a gift or two were able to make suits. We received permission to use the State recreation ground, but this year the State has given us a large field opposite our own building. The State, too, very kindly allowed one of their head native soldiers from the military camp to come to our school regularly every Tuesday afternoon from 5 to 6 to drill the school in gymnastics. This required preparing fifty suits.

At Christmas time the pageant was presented in Kikongo and Lingala, at Easter time in French. The wife of the Swiss consul came up to help one day. The eight or ten white folk and the great native gathering who witnessed the presentation spoke highly of the fine spirit and dignity which all who took part displayed.

We made a good start in putting over the state curriculum, but our staff was very inadequate having only two teachers who could follow and interpret the program to good advantage. What

the others lacked in training, however, was partly met by their willingness to learn and their desire to cooperate. This year, Banza Manteke has generously given us one of their head teachers.

Most of the pupils in school attended the inquirers' classes faithfully. The evening services were loyally supported. Good Friday evening a request was made for an extra service in the early evening. The church was crowded and one read the story of the Crucifixion by the dim light of a lantern, but the quietness bespoke the intense interest of the audience.

The afternoon classes for women registered 50 at the height of the year. These classes were divided into small groups so each could have individual help. During the year one of our women teachers contracted smallpox, another sleeping sickness. The women are intensely eager to read and write. Here too, there were many adjustments to make. One day as the women left the school, there arose sounds of quarreling. Next day, as we gathered those who took part, we learned that the quarrel was between two women, one a Catholic, one a Protestant. One of the men of the village had put the Catholic woman out of his house and had taken the Protestant one in. Every time these women met, they quarreled and fought. The pastor spoke to them, showing them that fighting was not God's way to settle palavers. Both seemed grateful for the opportunity to tell their troubles and after prayer went to their homes. They have been faithful in attendance ever since. The city is full of such tragic situations. The men of the church took the man to task that night to teach him.

Another woman was disciplined by the church because she had left her husband, saying he had refused her money and she had to go to other men who would pay. A man was suspended for taking a strange woman into his house while his wife was at the hospital with her new baby. Adultery, drinking, and polygamy are the three main causes for suspension. After good behavior for a year and with the consent of the village and the other members of the church, one may be readmitted.

There is still much to be desired in the marriage palavers. One evening a group came to my house: our pastor, his wife, a young girl who had been trained at our boarding school at Sona

Bata, and an older sister. There was also present a young man to whom the young girl had been sent. His uncle who had accompanied him said that he had sent and paid for the girl so that his nephew would stop having other women in his house and settle down to one. Our pastor protested, but the girl's uncle who is a deacon in the village church, left for home saying that there was nothing one could do, for the money was already "eaten up." A few mornings later, the rest of the family took the train and left the girl in the man's hut.

At the great Fall meetings which closed up the work of the year at Léopoldville, we were glad to know that twenty-six were baptized, three were readmitted to the church, and seven couples married. At Ngombe which is a district church, thirteen were baptized and seven were readmitted. The collections through the year have been nearly enough to meet the evangelistic expense.

I have given you a glimpse of how the year passed, citing just a few of the many problems which one continually meets. The year has been a most interesting one, a busy one, but a happy one too.

"MY TASK"

GRACE COOPER

"THE Lord is risen indeed." He has been in Congo and is here today. He still finds entrance in spite of fear-closed doors. He still stands in our midst and says. "Peace be unto you." "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid." "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

My chief job this year is that of supervising our seven regional schools which are boarding schools located at each of our church centers. Along with this we are trying to build up a greater interest on the part of the parents in the education of their children and their taking more responsibility for seeing to it that all their children attend school when they are old enough. Our aim is to help the children grow "in wisdom and stature, and in favor

with God and man." Only in Christian homes and schools can such growth take place.

We spend a week or two at each school giving help and advice wherever we can. *Dibundu*, who is my helper in this work, understands practically all of the dialects used in our Kikongo field and can speak most of them, so he often acts as interpreter especially when we have to deal with the older people. Dibundu is also a good preacher. Between us we conduct from one to four services a day when we are out in the district. He is quite a help when it comes to inspecting school gardens and helping the pupils and teachers with their buildings and the making of seats and desks for the classroom.

Wherever we go we put on a campaign for getting the girls in school. We try to call together the elders, parents and village chiefs from the surrounding area. We try to show them that there is only One who can really help them, and that they must give their girls as well as their boys a Christian education.

The Women of Congo are longing for release from their bonds of fear, superstition and ignorance. Some were once in fellowship but were unable to stand up against the pressure of their heathen relatives. One by one they are gradually coming back seeking the Way that they had left. Fetishes and witchcraft have brought them no comfort.

At Kinkose we hold a special meeting just for the women. Several of them stayed to talk with us after the service. One said she was staying away from communion because she had let her husband have money and chickens which she knew he was using to get fetishes. (Husband and wife have separate property accounts.) Another one said she wanted to come back into the church. Dina Kambamba in her ignorance believed that someone had bewitched her child and made him ill, so she hired the witch-doctor to smell out the witch. This brought her no comfort. She asked the Lord for forgiveness for her lack of faith and asked to be restored to the church. Mamvula Marie was tired of her life of sin. She asked the Lord to forgive her. In the evening she brought us her fetishes that were supposed to have protected her family from thieves and illness, especially epilepsy. Pray for these women and all others

like them that they might find that peace that "passeth all understanding" and establish Christian homes where their children might be saved from experiences such as theirs.

STATION NEWS NOTES

Kimpese—Kimpese began on August 19th what promises to be the greatest year in the history of the school, with the largest enrollment ever—134 in men's schools (Theological, Normal and Bible) 110 in women's classes and some 350 in Primary Schools, 112 of whom are boarders. The recently elected Senior Student (President of Student Council) happens to be a fine young man from one of our A.B.F.M.S. stations, Vanga, which station this year has an unusually large number of families in school.

The Ericksons, on 24 hours notice, with only a half a day in New York to complete pre-sailing formalities, were able to catch an earlier boat and arrive some 10 days after opening of school, instead of the anticipated several weeks. They were given a hearty welcome by both students and staff and took up their schedule of classes almost immediately.

Bobby Hall is enjoying French, drawing and singing in classes with native children, as well as keeping up his Calvert course.

* * * *

Before this issue is off the press we hope to welcome Rev. and Mrs. Donald Niles into our Congo family. They are sailing, with Vendla Anderson from Antwerp, Belgium, on the 26th of September, where they have been studying French. A BIG welcome awaits you all and also plenty of work.

* * * *

Léopoldville—Ben Armstrong, our secretary, left for New York the 26th of September for a mission secretaries' conference with the Mission Boards.

The Watkins' three children started French school September 12th after two months vacation. There are 7 American and 5 British children this year besides Belgian, Danish and Portuguese.

Banza Manteke—Banza Manteke is on the air! —since August 22nd. It makes far-off Moanza (500 miles—3 days by car) much closer when we can talk with Ed Boone and Marguerite Eldredge every morning and be heard by all our other stations listening. Unfortunately Vanga and Kikongo, who also have these army transmitters are temporarily off the air, due to breakdown of their light plants. When they are back on the air, we shall be able to get the news from and talk with all our Kwango stations but Boko. We all use the same wave length: 7.1 megacycles; 42.2 meters. We broadcast every day between 7:15 and 7:30 A.M. here—that would be 1:15 Eastern Daylight Time.

The other big news is that we have been granted a million francs ($20,000) by a Belgian fund for welfare work in Congo to build an *Ecole Ménagère*—Girls' School for training in Homemaking. Because of the stipulation that it must be finished in two years' time, it was difficult for the Conference to decide whether it should be attempted, with Engwalls home on furlough and only Phil Uhlinger to carry on all the Evangelistic work and building. However, it was decided to go ahead and already, in two months' time, we can report good progress. One teacher's house is being roofed, the walls of the other are nearly up, and the foundations are being laid for the main building, which Elmer Hall came down from Kimpese one week-end to line up. The buildings are being constructed of cement blocks, made by school boys under the supervision of masons, which speeds building considerably.

Every week-end Phil Uhlinger is away on a trip in the district for an annual Matondo or district church meeting. He reports large attendances, good spirit, numbers of baptisms—over 500 so far.

At the leper camp the population remains about 150. Though we have been happy to release as many as 20 patients on temporary leave because the disease seems to be arrested, just as many new patients arrive to take their places—some from long distances. The fame of the new remedies: Diasone and Sulfetrone, and the results of their use have traveled far. *Matondo kwa Nzambi*! —we say with them: Thanks be to God!

A PROBLEM CHILD GIVES HIS WITNESS

MARGARET JUMP

MUNDADI is now in our highest class in the Vanga school, but he has had a very hard time getting there. He has been punished more than any other boy in school, has had to miss class often to finish the work he didn't complete during working hours, and was even put on probation. But he is back in school now, and his own story is much better than anything we could say about him.

"All during school I bothered first *Mama* Freas, then *Mama* Robbins, and then *Mama* Jump to let me be examined for baptism. But they all told me that I wasn't ready, that I showed too many bad habits. They prayed with me that God would help me to correct my faults, but I just couldn't see it and kept on bothering them. I was always in trouble, having to work punishments, and finally I was put out of school. While I was on probation, I worked in a village with one of the teachers. He helped me. Now I see that I was wrong. I know I wasn't ready to be baptised. I never had accepted Christ, I never tried to become a new person in Him. I just kept on following all my bad habits. But Christ is in my heart now. I still have bad habits, but I am trying to get rid of them. I want to be ready for baptism when the examination time comes. I am praying and want you to pray for me too that God will keep me in His way, and help me to overcome the sins in my life."

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.

PSALM 19:14.

BELGIAN CONGO MISSION DIRECTORY
with P. O. addresses*

BANZA MANTEKE
via Matadi
Miss Mary Bonar
Miss Esther Ehnbom, R.N.
Dr. and Mrs. H. M. Freas
Rev. and Mrs. Philip Uhlinger

BOKO
via Popokabaka et Inkisi
Rev. and Mrs. W. F. Robbins
Miss Eva Shepard

KIKONGO *sur Wamba*
via Banningville
Miss Agnes Anderson, R.N.
Rev. E. and G. Atkins
Rev. and Mrs. L. A. Brown
Miss Grace Cooper

E.P.I. KIMPESE
via Matadi
Rev. and Mrs. H. Erickson
Rev. and Mrs. E. G. Hall

LEOPOLDVILLE II
Mr. and Mrs. B. W. Armstrong
Rev. Phyllis Benner
Mr. and Mrs. H. J. Watkins

MOANZA *sur Inzia,*
via Masi-Manimba
Rev. and Mrs. Edwin Boone
Miss Marguer[illegible]
Miss Alice Jo[illegible]

SONA BATA
via Mata
Drs. Philip a[illegible]
Miss Jean Lu[illegible]
Rev. and Mrs. [illegible]
Miss Emily Satterberg, R.N.
Dr. and Mrs. E. W. Price (BMS)
Miss Vendla Anderson
Rev. and Mrs. Donald Niles

VANGA *sur Kwilu,*
via Banningville
Dr. and Mrs. A. C. Osterholm
Miss Dorothy Wiseman, R.N.
Miss Doris Wiseman

LECO, CONGO BOOK SHOP
B. P. 123 Léo-Est
Rev. and Mrs. G. W. Carpenter

ON FURLOUGH

Rev. and Mrs. H. D. Brown
Rev. and Mrs. T. E. Bubeck
Rev. and Mrs. M. S. Engwall
Miss Helen Gaskill
Rev. and Mrs. L. Gittings
Rev. and Mrs. C. E. Smith
Dr. and Mrs. G. W. Tuttle

STUDY IN BELGIUM

Miss Annis Ford
Rev. and Mrs. C. J. Jump
Dr. and Mrs. John W. Walker

UNDER APPOINTMENT

Dr. Carrie Sprague
REV. and MRS. EDWARD V. Wright
MISS EMILY Keyes

**** Precede name of each station with A.B.F.M.S., except Kimpese***